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(56) Documents Cited

GB 2349494 A

GB 2230373 A

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Internet printout of game details for "Blood Money"

Internet printout of game details for "Xenon 2"

(58) Field of Search

UK CL (Edition T) G4V V118

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ONLINE DATABASES: WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO

(54) Abstract Title

Gaming machine where points may be exchanged for game playing hints

(57) A gaming or amusement machine (100) arranged to allow a player to accumulate points or the like, the machine (100) being further arranged to allow a player to exchange said accumulated points for a game facilitating option (354) providing a real, and/or perceived advancement in the game. The machine also incorporates secondary "trail" games and outcome-influencing features. Points are won depending on the results obtained from a pseudo-random generator, as in a conventional fruit machine.

In one embodiment, the player is provided with a list (354) of hints or helpful tricks etc., which a player can exchange for points, each hint providing the player with a real and/or perceived advancement in the game.

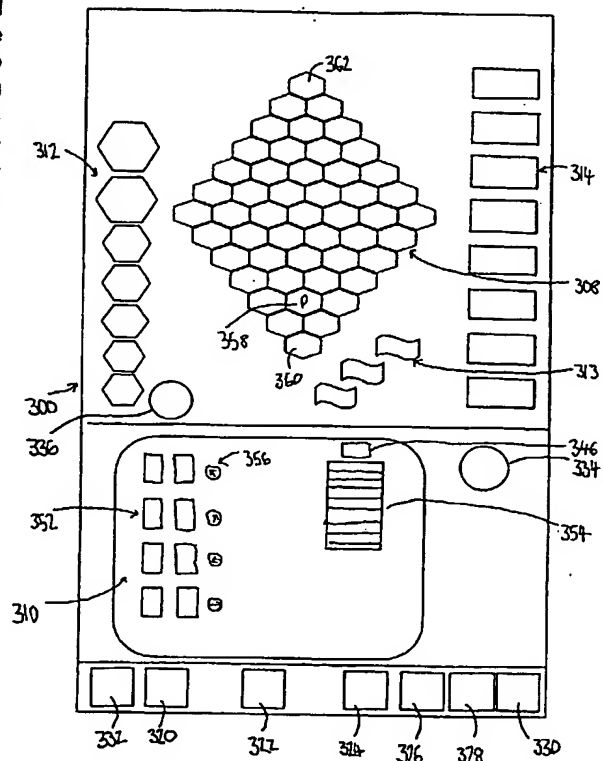


FIGURE 4

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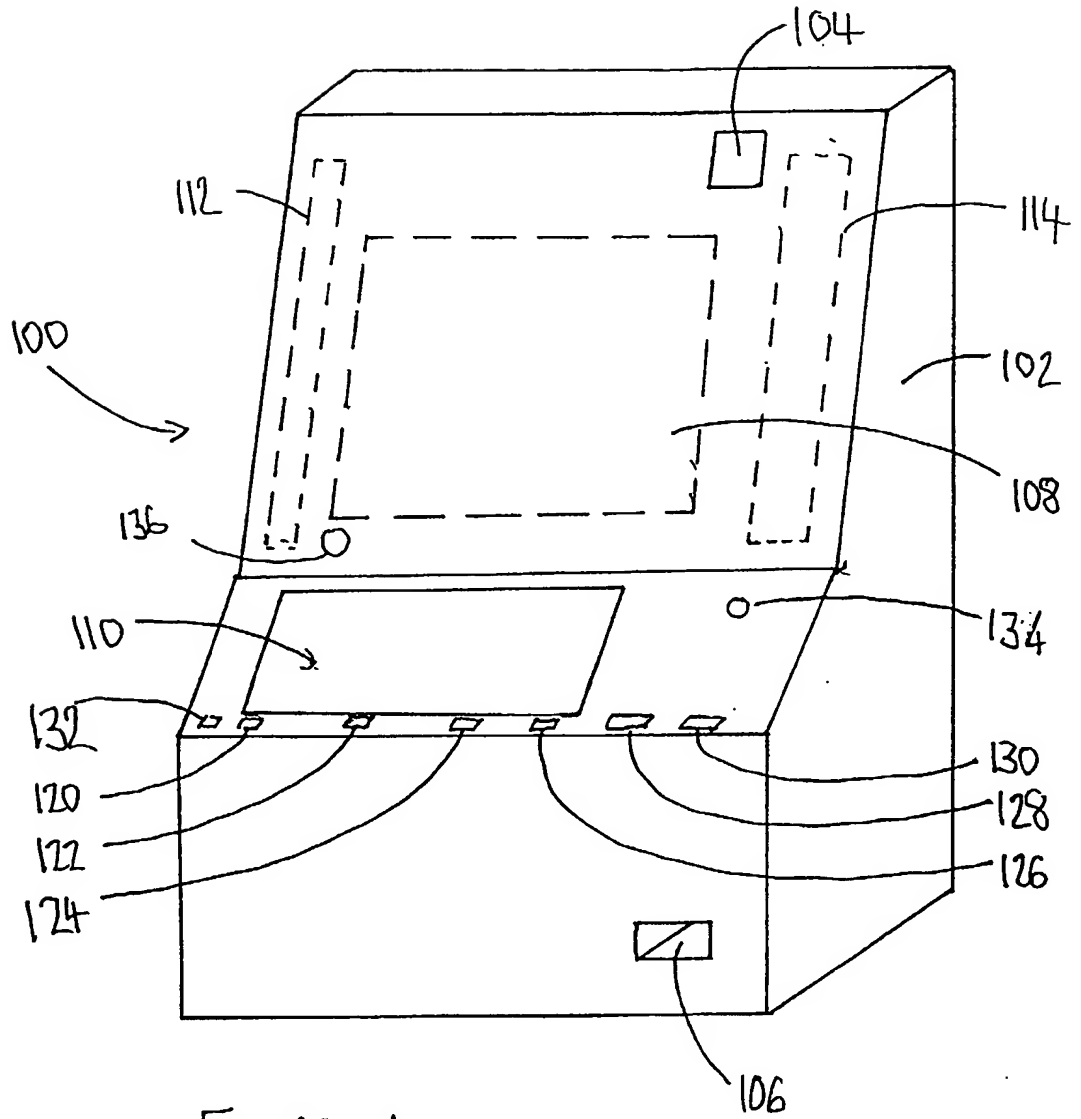


FIGURE 1

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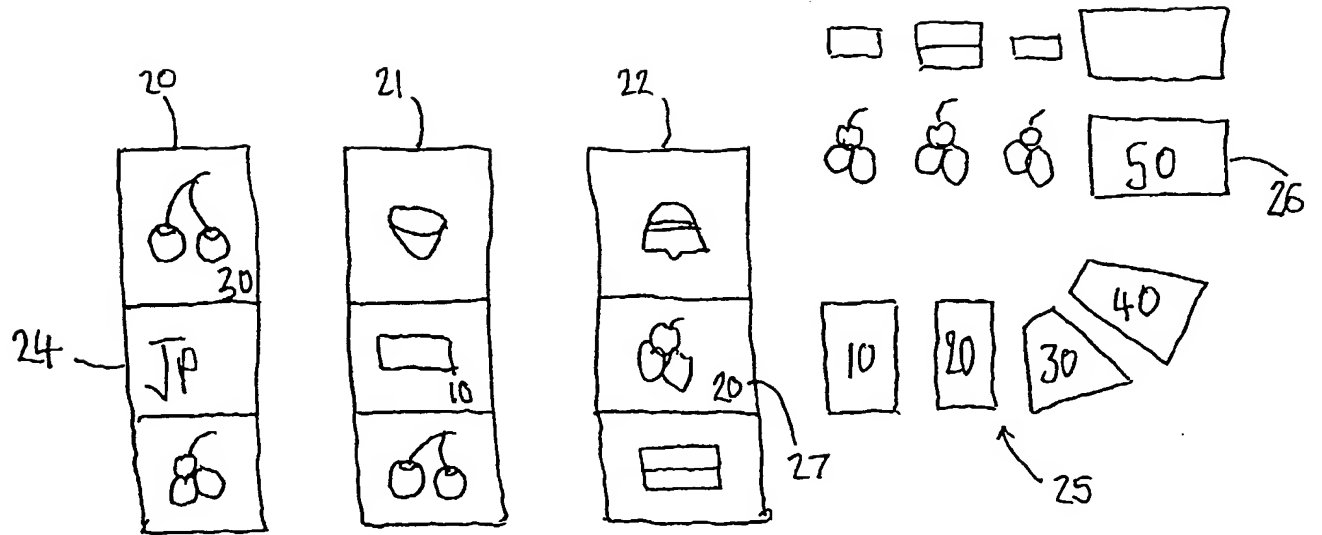


FIGURE 2

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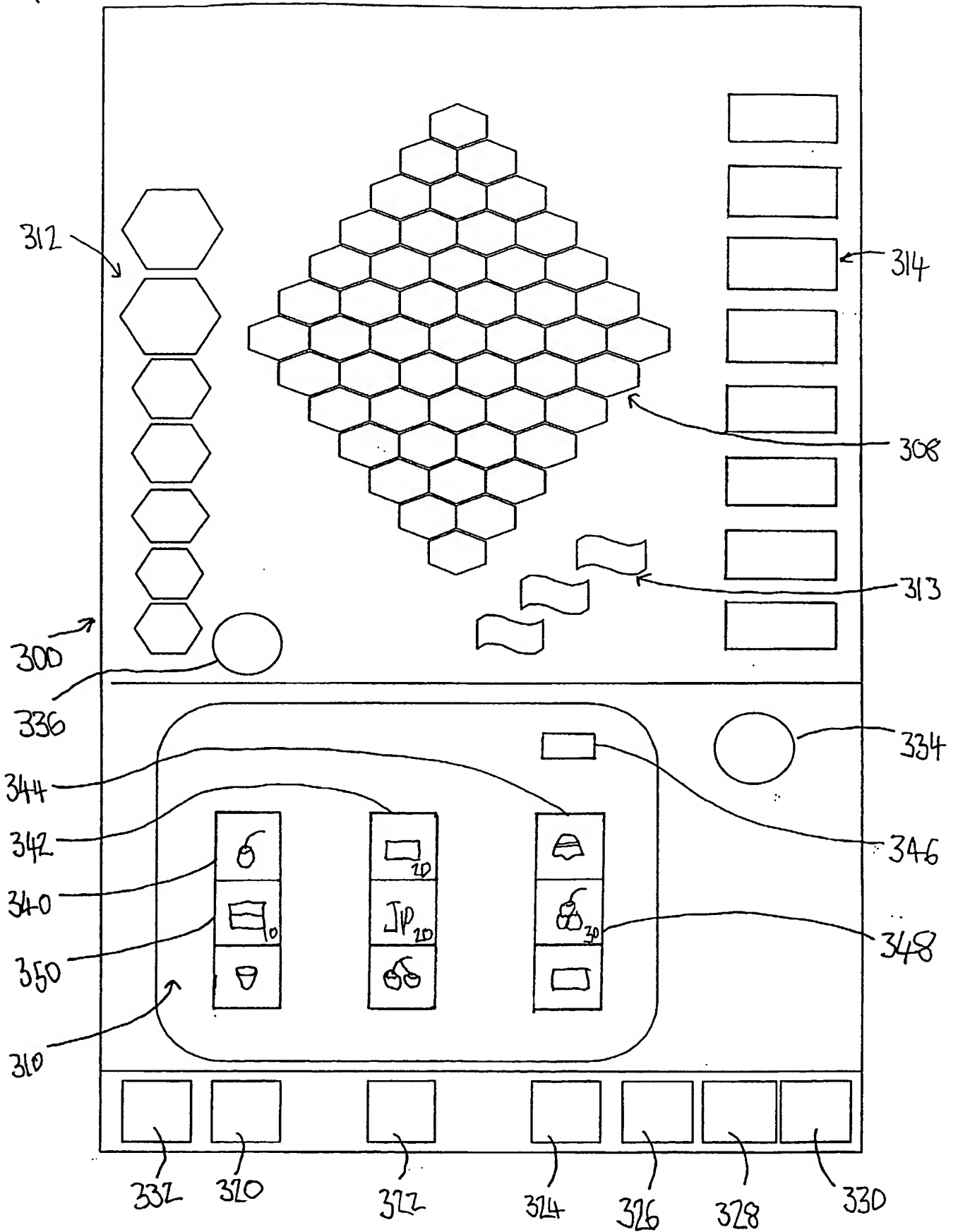


FIGURE 3

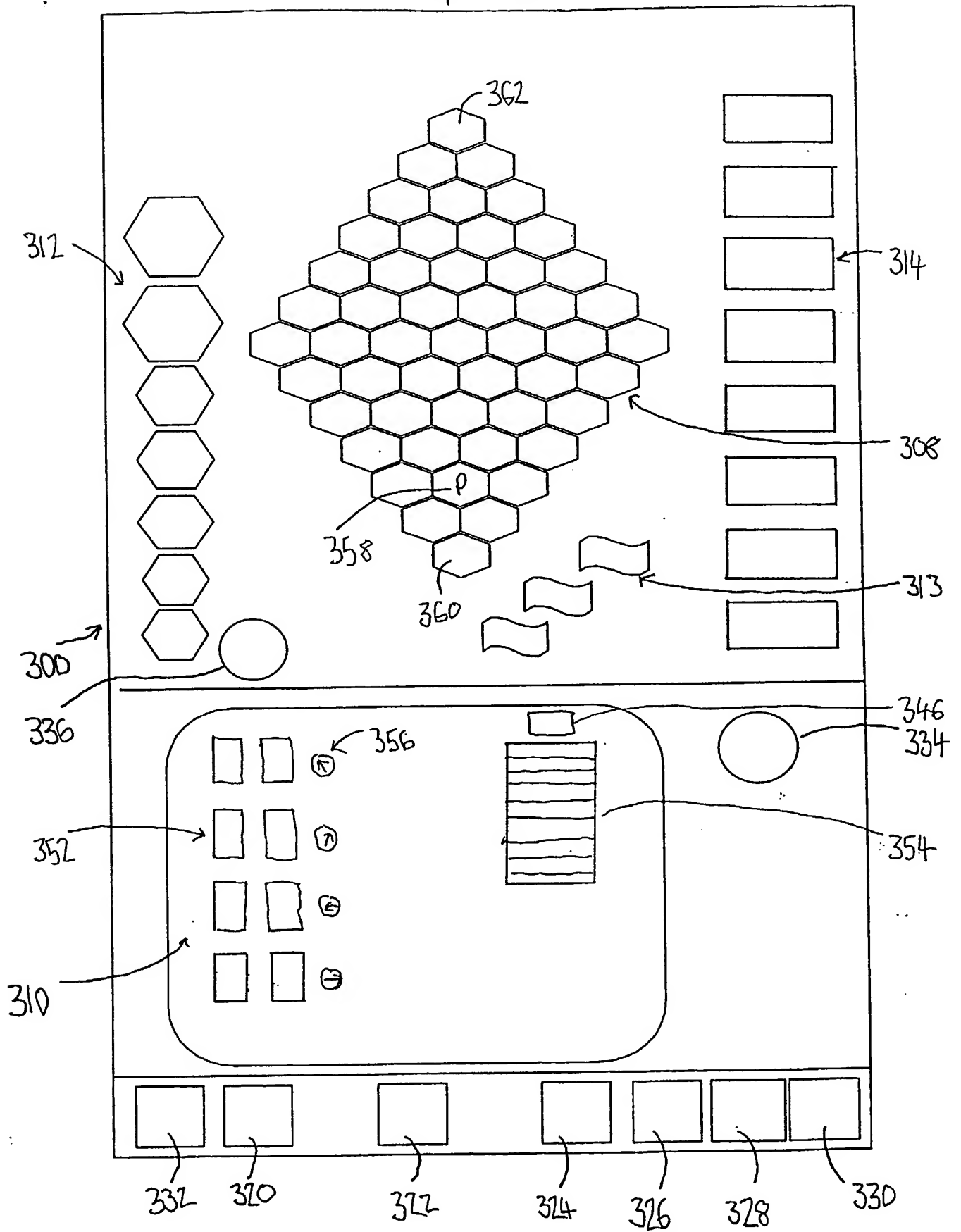


FIGURE 4

**IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO GAMING AND
AMUSEMENT MACHINES**

5 This invention relates to improvements in gaming and amusement machines, especially but not exclusively Amusement-with-Prizes (AWP) machines.

Amusement machines generally provide a primary game, which a player
10 can play by putting credits into the machine, and a secondary game, or feature which can be accessed are a level of success that has been achieved in the primary game. Machines are known in which a player can use points won in the primary game to enter the secondary game. In
15 other machines, it is known that players may choose to gamble a selected proportion of their points for a win or may enter an end game, the apparent reward and difficulty of which is set according to points accumulated.

One example of such a prior art amusement machine is shown in
20 GB 2 230 373, which shows a machine in which a predetermined number of credits accumulated over a number of games may be exchanged for a special feature. Such machines are therefore well known and may not provide the level of player appeal that is desired.

25 It is a common aim to produce a machine that is more interesting to a player. Players play AWP machines to win prizes, but also to be amused: to get value for money.

The aim of some embodiments of the present invention is to increase
30 player interest in playing the machine, and/or to give the player a greater perception of involvement/greater perception that things are happening as

a result of their actions. It is also an aim to increase the players perception that their tactics and skill will result in a greater chance of winning.

5 Figure 2 illustrates prior art and shows a games machine in which three reels, referenced 20, 21 and 22, spin around a horizontal axis and symbols appear in a window having a win line 24. Some of the symbols have over printed on them points 27 which move a player along a trail 25 until the points are exchanged for a win 26.

10

According to the invention there is provided a gaming or amusement machine having a generator display displaying a portion of at least one pseudo-random generator having a plurality of different symbols; wherein one or more of the symbols has a number of points associated with it; and
15 wherein the machine is arranged to allow the points to be exchanged for one or more options from a plurality of options during a feature.

Thus, the use of the points in a feature give the user of the machine the perception that they are improving their chances of winning a larger sum
20 of money thereby enhancing their enjoyment of the game.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a gaming or amusement machine arranged to allow a player to accumulate points, or the like, the machine being further arranged to allow a player to
25 exchange said accumulated points for a game facilitating option providing a real, and/or perceived advancement in the game.

The game facilitating option may be thought of as a way of providing a benefit to a player, but which does not directly result in a win; it may be
30 thought of as an aid to progressing the game.

The skilled person will appreciate that points may be represented by the accumulation of credits, money, symbols and may not simply be a numerical value.

5 Preferably there are a plurality of generators. The generator is optionally either mechanical (e.g. a reel or a gimballed dice) or computer-generated (e.g. a pseudo reel display simulating a reel, a dice, or a card). Where the generator is computer-generated, the machine is provided with a display unit such as an LCD or CRT display (such displays are commonly
10 referred to as video displays in the art). A points total (or points accumulated) display may be provided by or on the display unit, but said points total display may be elsewhere on the machine, for example in or part of the art-work on a housing or casing of the machine.

15 The generator display preferably displays a win line of symbols from the at least one generator and one or more symbols above and/or below the win line.

Conveniently, the machine is arranged to maintain a balance of points that
20 remain after a player has exchanged said accumulated points for a game facilitating option. Such an arrangement allows a player to accumulate points, exchange a portion of them on a feature, and be left with a balance to which further points can be added, or may be the player may exchange the balance for a further game facilitating option.

25 A feature is generally a game or a gamble which, may be accessed following a cash win or a points win. A cash win is obtained in a game on a machine with a plurality of generators when the generators produce a predetermined arrangement of symbols, which may be a line of identical
30 symbols, along the win line, with the value of the win being determined by the predetermined of symbols. A points win is obtained in a game on

a similar machine when each generator produces, may be in the win line, a symbol having a number of points associated with it.

5 The game facilitating option, or option, may be provided by the machine during a primary, or a secondary game, but will generally be provided during a secondary game.

10 If the player has won points, the machine may be arranged to allow the points to be used in a feature to exchange for an option giving some real and/or perceived benefit or advantage. If the player chooses to be given the opportunity of exchanging the points, the machine may be arranged to present a list of options where each option has a value in points associated with it. The value of an option is not necessarily fixed and the machine may be arranged to vary the value randomly or according to how far
15 through the feature and/or game the player has progressed or how much money the player has won. The options available to the player may depend upon the number of points they have won. The machine may be arranged to allow a player to select which option from the list of available options they use or the choice may be made for them by the machine.

20

Where the machine is provided with a display unit, the list of options is optionally provided in the form of a list or a menu. Alternatively, the list of options may be provided on a further reel with the value of each option being displayed on a separate reel. Whilst said list or menu may be
25 provided by or on the display unit, the list may be visually displayed elsewhere on the machine, for example in or part of the art-work on the housing or casing.

A suitable feature to which the player has access following a cash win and
30 in which the points might be used is a Hi-Lo gamble. A Hi-Lo gamble involves at least two pseudo-random generators, which generate symbols

having a value wherein the first may be greater than, the same as or less than the second. The Hi-Lo generators may be mechanical (e.g. reels or gimballled dice) or, where the machine is provided with a video display, computer-generated (e.g. reels, dice, cards etc.).

5

In the following description of a Hi-Lo gamble, the Hi-Lo generators produce or deal playing cards; it is to be understood, though, that alternative Hi-Lo generators may also be used. In this Hi-Lo gamble, at least two playing cards are dealt. The first card is dealt face-up and the
 10 second card is shown face-down. Where more than two cards are dealt, the further cards are also dealt face-down. One or more of the backs of the face-down cards are optionally marked to indicate to the player the hidden value of certain cards.

15 In this feature, the player gambles whether the face-down card will be higher or lower than the face-up card. The machine may be arranged to give a player the option to collect the win or may be to change to another feature.

20 Upon gambling (i.e selecting whether the next card will be higher or lower), the machine is arranged to turn the face-down card over. If the player guessed correctly, play moves to the next card and the value of the win increases. If the card turned is the same value as the previous card, the player does not lose but the value of the win does not increase. If the
 25 player did not gamble correctly, the win is lost and the feature ends. This process continues until the player loses, collects the win, exchanges to another feature or the jackpot is reached.

Examples of options that the machine may be arranged to present a player
 30 for use in a gamble (which may be a Hi/Lo playing card gamble) include the following: a guaranteed win, a guaranteed win until a playing card

with a certain number appears, an extra life, revealing one of the next cards, change card, or re-deal cards. The value in points of the first four options will generally be higher than the last two.

- 5 Optionally, in the machine according to the invention with a plurality of generators, access to a points feature is provided following a points win. This points feature may be the same or different to the win feature which is accessed following a cash win; preferably it is different.
- 10 Optionally, the points feature may be a one- or multi-dimensional trail comprising a plurality of squares. Where the trail is a multi-dimensional trail, it is generally a two-dimensional trail, which may have one or more end squares. By reaching a square at the end of the trail, the player wins a prize, e.g. the jackpot. The squares themselves on the trail optionally
- 15 provide bonuses such as more points, access to a spot feature, or they may progress the player along one or more bonus trails which provide the player with further prizes (e.g. a gold run) or, where the machine is provided with a display, give access to a hidden feature such as a video game at their culmination.
- 20 The machine may be arranged such that movement between the squares, on the trail, is generally achieved by the player performing a gamble e.g. a Hi-Lo gamble such as that described above where the number of Hi-Lo generators is generally two. Thus, if the player wins the gamble, the
- 25 player is allowed to move between the squares; if the player neither wins nor loses, the player does not move and, optionally, access to the feature is maintained; and if the player loses the gamble, movement is not allowed and access to the feature is lost. In a two-dimensional trail there is optionally a choice of direction of movement forward. Preferably, the
- 30 machine is arranged such that a different gamble is provided according to the direction chosen. Typically, the apparent difficulty of the gamble will

depend upon the direction of movement. Thus, if the movement is in the direction of the End Square or is towards a square having a valuable bonus, the difficulty of the gamble may be greater.

- 5 The machine may be arranged such that points accumulated by a player can be used to buy options that at least give the player the impression that movement through the points feature is being facilitated. The options available are generally the same as those listed above in relation to the win feature. Further options may be provided which progress the player
10 along one of the bonus trails.

- At least a proportion (e.g. 25% or 50%) of the points won in a game is optionally held over between games according to a random or pseudo-random selection. If the number of points reaches a certain level, they
15 may optionally be exchanged for a win.

- The machine is also optionally provided with one or more of the features commonly used in an AWP machine generally known in the art such as a nudge facility, or a hold facility.
20

- The machine optionally may be arranged to provide an indication of the number of points available to the player using a mechanical or computer-generated indicator.

- 25 According to a further aspect of the invention there is provided a method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine having a generator display displaying a portion of at least one pseudo-random generator having a plurality of different symbols; wherein one or more of the symbols has a number of points associated with it; wherein the
30 method comprises allowing the player to exchange the points for one or more options from a plurality of options during a feature.

According to yet a further aspect of the invention there is provided a computer readable medium arranged to carry instructions, which are arranged to cause an amusement machine to perform the method of any
5 one of claims 17 to 19 when loaded into the amusement machine.

The computer readable medium may be any one or more of the following:
a floppy disc, a CD ROM, a DVD ROM/RAM, a memory, a hard drive, a
10 transmitted signal (such as an internet down load etc).

An embodiment of the invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings of which:-

15 **Figure 1** shows an overview of a gaming and amusement machine for use in the invention;

Figure 2 shows what is believed to be prior art;

20 **Figure 3** shows a gaming and amusement machine in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 4 shows a modification of the machine of Figure 3.

25 **Figure 1** shows a coin/token feed amusement-with-prizes (AWP) machine 100 having a housing 102, coin and token pay in slot 104, a payout slot 106, a feature 108, a video display unit 110, trails 112 and 114, three hold buttons 120, 122, 124 (one for each generator in the video display), a stop/collect button 126, "exchange for feature" buttons
30 128 and 136, a start/gamble button 130, a cancel button 132 and an "exchange points" button 134.

Figure 2 has already been described on page 1.

5 An AWP machine, referenced 300, is shown in Figures 3 and 4. It is basically similar to that of Figure 1 and similar components have been given similar numbers (e.g. nudge display 118 of machine 100 becomes nudge display 318 of machine 300, and so on).

10 The feature 308 is shown in more detail from which it is clear that it is a two-dimensional trail.

15 The display 310 is also shown in more detail as comprising three virtual reels, or generators, 340, 342 and 344 on which are marked symbols which optionally have points 348 marked on them. The display 310 also shows the points total 346. However, the points total display 346 and/or the below discussed list of options 354 may be elsewhere on the machine, for example in or part of the art-work on the housing or casing of the machine.

20 When the three symbols in the win line 350 each have points associated with them, access to the feature 308 is obtained and the player may choose to access that feature by pressing the exchange button 328.

25 In Figure 4, the play during the feature 308 is illustrated. The reference symbols used in Figure 4 have the same meaning to where they are used in Figure 3. In Figure 4, the player has reached position 358 on feature 308. At this position, they have four options on where to move next. They can move directly to the left or to the right or ahead to the left or ahead to the right. These four directions of movement each have an associated Hi-Lo gamble as shown by the four arrows 356, each arrow
30 being associated with a pair of cards 352 on video display 310. The hold

button 324 can be used to change the direction of movement selected. In this feature (and other features using a Hi-Lo gamble), hold button 320 is the Hi-select button and hold button 322 is the Lo-select button.

- 5 In playing feature 308, the player may choose to exchange the points for a hint, or an option, by pressing the exchange button 334. The video display then shows the list of options 354. The machine may randomly illuminate one of the available options such that the player has no control over which option is selected or, by pressing the cancel button 332, the
- 10 player may have control over the choice of option. The list of options may include some or all of the following:

Sure thing	when this option is used, the next turn of a card is guaranteed to be a winner;
Lucky number card	if this option is used, the player is guaranteed to win until a card having the correct number is turned;
Extra life	this option allows the player to lose a Hi-Lo gamble without ending the feature;
X-ray	this option will x-ray the face-down card (or one of the face-down cards where more than one is present) and allow the player to know what they need to do to win;
Change card	this option allows the player to change the face-up card for another (usually better) card; or
Re-deal cards	this option causes the machine to replace all the current cards with a new set.

- 15 The cost of each option may vary, for example, according to how far the player has progressed along feature 308 from the start 360 to the finish 362 or according to how much money the player has won

Once a player has selected an option, the cost of that option in points is deducted from the points total 346, leaving a balance. This balance can be further increased, and if sufficient a player may exchange more points for a further option.

5

Examples of spot features, which might be accessed by landing on the relevant square, include the following games:

Multi-slots	this feature consists of several miniature 'casino style' fruit machines. The player presses the start button and the machines play quickly in succession. The wins achieved are accumulated.
Horse Racing	Several horses are available and the player selects one of them. At the end of the race, the player is awarded a win depending upon the position in which his chosen horse finishes.
Lotto	After selecting a Lotto play card, a random series of numbers is drawn: the number of numbers matched on the card determines the win level.
Blackjack	The player plays a number of hands of blackjack against a dealer. The wins achieved are accumulated.
Wheel of Fortune	A pin of a wheel of fortune determines the win.
Roulette	The player makes a bet and spins a roulette wheel.
Dice/Craps	Win is determined by the throw of a plurality of dice.
Net Cash	A number of random bank-notes flies around, on and off the screen, the value of notes still on the screen is the award.

Examples of video games, which may be reached at the end of bonus trail 313, include:

Cash Invaders	The player has to shoot down a number of 'invaders' in a set time, the greater the number of those shot before the time runs out or the player is killed, the greater the amount of money awarded.
Frogger	The player has to move a frog around by landing on moving lily pads, logs etc. while avoiding crocodiles and sinking lily pads, the longer the player survives, the greater the amount of money awarded.
Cash-teroids	The player has to blow up asteroids: the number of hits before dying or running out of time, determines the cash prize.
Duck Shoot	A number of ducks pop up and down and the player tries to hit as many as he can.
Mine Sweeper	A grid is shown on the screen and the path to the jackpot is shown momentarily. The player then has to move trying to remember the path. Each successful move is rewarded with a value until the jackpot is reached or a wrong move is made.
Rally	The player has to navigate a car through a slalom course. The number of successful gates navigated determines the amount of the cash prize.

5

The above video games are given as examples only. Variants of them could also be used.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming or amusement machine arranged to allow a player to accumulate points, or the like, the machine being further arranged to allow a player to exchange said accumulated points for a game facilitating option providing a real, and/or perceived advancement in the game.
2. A machine according to claim 1, wherein said points are provided by pseudo-random generators.
3. A machine according to claim 2 having at least two generators.
4. A machine according to claim 2 or 3 wherein the generator displays a win line of symbols from the at least one generator and one or more symbols above and/or below the win line.
5. A machine according to any of claims 2 to 4 wherein the machine is arranged to provide a primary game and a secondary, or feature game, and said feature game is accessible when the generator(s) show the same symbol or where the generator(s) show symbol(s) having points associated with them.
6. A machine according to claim 5 wherein the generator(s) show the same symbol or where the generator(s) show symbol(s) having points associated with them in the win line.
7. A machine according to any of claims 2 to 6 wherein the at least one generator is a computer generated generator and the machine comprises a display.

8. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the machine is arranged to allow a player to select the game facilitating option from a plurality of options each of which appears to increase the likelihood of a player of the machine winning.

5

9. A machine according to claim 8 wherein the plurality of options is presented as a menu from which a player can select one or more of said options.

10 10. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the machine is arranged to provide a gamble, such as a Hi-Lo gamble, to allow a player to select an option.

11. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims which is
15 arranged to provide an indication of the total number of points.

12. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims which is arranged to hold at least a proportion of the points won in a game over to the following game.

20

13. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the machine is arranged to provide an option which comprises exchanging the points for a win.

25 14. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims which comprises one or more trails.

15. A machine according to claim 14 wherein the machine is arranged to provide an option which comprises exchanging points for progress
30 along a trail.

16. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the machine is arranged to vary the points required to exchange for an option.

5 17. A gaming or amusement machine substantially as hereinbefore described or illustrated with reference to Figures 1, 3 or 4 of the accompanying drawings.

10 18. A method of increasing the player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine comprising allowing a player to accumulate points, and further, allowing said player to exchange points for a game facilitating option which provides a perceived advancement in the game.

15 19. A method according to claim 17 wherein the machine is as defined in any one of claims 1 to 17.

20 20. A method of increasing player appeal of a gaming or amusement machine substantially as described herein with reference to Figures 1, 3, or 4 of the accompanying drawings.

21. A computer readable medium arranged to carry instructions, which are arranged to cause an amusement machine to perform the method of any one of claims 18 to 20 when loaded into the amusement machine.



Application No: GB 0127967.8
Claims searched: 1-20

Examiner: Rosalind Lyon
Date of search: 8 April 2002

Patents Act 1977 Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.T): G4V (VAA)

Int Cl (Ed.7): G07F (17/32, 17/34)

Other: ONLINE DATABASES: WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	GB 2230373 A BELL-FRUIT MANUFACTURING COMPANY LIMITED See especially page 1 line 19- page 2 line 7, page 2 lines 23-33, page 3, lines 15-20.	1-6, 8-11, 13, 18-21 at least
A	GB 2349494 A IGT UK LTD See especially all page 1, page 2 lines 7-15, page 3 lines 20-22, page 6 lines 4-6.	
A	GB 2098778 A QUESTENCO LTD See especially page 1 lines 7-12, 31-32, 51-65, 99-105, 126-129	
X	Internet print-out of game details for "Blood Money"	1
X	Internet print-out of game details for "Xenon 2"	1

X Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step
Y Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.
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E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.